

BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18

Introduction

Has the **LORD GOD's** plan gone wrong because **CHRIST** was rejected by the very people who were prepared for **HIM to come into this world through** (the **JEWS**)?

We've seen how this Chapter has previously revealed that, as always, some **OPEN THEIR HEARTS** to **GOD'S REVELATION** while others **HARDENED THEIR HEARTS!** Yet if **GOD ELECTS** and **SELECTS** as **HE** did with both **ISAAC** and **JACOB**, does that mean **HE'S** being **UNFAIR?**

In *verses 14-18*, we see another stage in the developing argument for **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY**, particularly as it deals with **ISRAEL**.

GOD'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE is seen not only in **ABRAHAM'S** children and grandchildren, it is seen elsewhere. Here in our text we see it operating in **GOD'S** dealings with the **PHARAOH** of **EGYPT** who stubbornly refused to heed **GOD'S WORD** and **WARNINGS**. Here we learn that the **AUDACITY** and **REBELLION** of man can never thwart the **PURPOSES OF GOD**. And we will see that **GOD** has a right to deal with the **OBSTINATE** and **DEFIANT** as **HE** so **CHOOSES!**

We should not think of **GOD** as being unfair though. **GOD'S MERCY** is far wider and higher than anyone dare hope, but no one is **ENTITLED** to it and no one can demand from **GOD** an accounting or the principles on which **HE BESTOWS MERCY** and **GRACE** nor that **HE** should **BESTOW** it differently than **HE DOES!** **GOD'S MERCY** and **GRACE** may impose conditions but they cannot be made subject to man's conditions. Understand though that **GOD** delights to show **MERCY** and has **LAVISHED** it upon mankind.

I. WE SEE THAT GOD'S CHOICES ARE NOT ARBITRARY!

(Vs 14)

Here we see a question asking if there is **UNRIGHTEOUSNESS** with **GOD** over the **CHOICES HE** makes.

BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18

i.e. *"Does GOD ever make UNJUST CHOICES?"*

In the immediate context, was **GOD UNJUST** in **CHOOSING ISAAC** over **ISHMAEL**, and **JACOB** over **ESAU**? *(By the way, the question as it is asked implies a negative response!)*

And we see **PAUL'S** emphatic response is, **"GOD FORBID" i.e. "Never!"** A lot of people have a real problem right here. They see **GOD** as being **UNFAIR** in acting outside of or before mankind has acted. They want to know how could **GOD** choose to **LOVE JACOB**, and **HATE ESAU** before they were even born?

The answer is simple. It is because **GOD IS SOVEREIGN!** The mystery is (as I heard the late Dr. J. Vernon McGee put it) is not that **GOD HATED ESAU**. The mystery is that **GOD LOVED JACOB**, and an even greater wonder is that **HE LOVES ME**, a sinner just like **JACOB!** (Remember **JACOB** was a **CONNIVER!**)

Did **GOD** choose correctly? Read your **BIBLE** and you'll see that **ESAU** wasn't interested in **SPIRITUAL THINGS**, but was attracted to **CARNAL THINGS!**

Yes, **GOD CHOSE CORRECTLY—HE ALWAYS DOES!**

WE SEE THAT GOD'S CHOICES ARE NOT ARBITRARY...

II. WE SEE THAT GOD'S CHOICES ARE MERCIFUL!

(Vs 15-16)

Two arguments are made here to prove there is **NO INJUSTICE IN GOD!** The first is derived from the **SCRIPTURES** and the second is derived from the **UNCHANGING CHARACTER OF GOD WHO CANNOT BE UNRIGHTEOUS!**

Verse 15 reminds us that **GOD** has claimed in **HIS WORD** the **PREROGATIVE OF DIVINE RIGHT.**

**BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18**

It is **NOT UNJUST** for **GOD** to exercise a **SOVEREIGN'S RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS ACCORDING TO HIS JUSTICE!**

An example of **GOD** implementing **HIS PREROGATIVE** is found in **HIS WORD TO MOSES** (*Exodus 33:19*) which **PAUL** quotes here. As the **SOVEREIGN GOD**, **HE** has the **RIGHT** to **SHOW MERCY** to whomever **HE CHOOSES!** In fact, **HE IS NOT UNDER OBLIGATION TO EXTEND MERCY TO ANYONE!**

What was the context of **GOD** saying this? Well, this is shortly after the people of **ISRAEL** had **SINNED** by dancing around the golden calf and worshiping it at **MT. SINAI** while **MOSES** was on the mount receiving the **LAW OF GOD!** The people had **SINNED GRIEVOUSLY AGAINST GOD!** (*Exodus 32*)

If **GOD** had **ACTED** simply in **JUSTICE**, **HE** would have blotted out all **HIS PEOPLE** except **MOSES** and **JOSHUA** right then and there. But **MOSES** interceded for them! And instead of wholesale **JUDGMENT**, **GOD** allowed about **3000 men to lose their lives in the JUDGMENT** dished out by the sons of **LEVI** and the **LORD** plagued the rest of the people on top of that. (*Details not given*)

In *Exodus 33:19*, we see **MOSES** interceding for the people before the **LORD** in the **TABERNACLE** and that is where the **LORD** proclaimed that *“I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will show mercy.”*

GOD'S MERCY of course was seen in **HIS** sparing a sinful nation. Why did **GOD** pardon them? Because **GOD IS MERCIFUL!** Look at *Exodus 34:5-9!*

GOD grants **GRACIOUSLY** and **MERCIFULLY** but only as **HE CHOOSES TO GRANT!**

**BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18**

Now understand that **GOD** is not like a mad dictator saying **HE** can do whatever **HE** pleases. **HE** is revealing that **HIS** actions toward humanity will be true to **HIS CHARACTER OF BEING MERCIFUL, GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING,** and **ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS** and **TRUTH.** The **INTEGRITY OF GOD'S CHARACTER GOVERNS HIS ACTIONS.**

GOD'S FREEDOM and **MERCY** is advocated in these verses we are looking at. **GOD'S SUPERIOR POWER, HIS ABILITY TO EXECUTE WHAT HE DESIRES,** is everywhere acknowledged.

Man's fear, however, is that **GOD** will use **HIS POWER** arbitrarily and without regard to **HIS SUBJECTS,** or even against them. Everyone agrees that **GOD IS FREE;** but **IS HE JUST?**

Since the basis of **GOD'S DECISIONS** or **CHOICES** is **HIS MERCY,** *Romans 9:16* reveals that **MAN'S WILL** or **EFFORT** is not the supreme consideration.

None of mankind **DESERVES** or can **EARN GOD'S MERCY!** **GOD'S MERCY DOES NOT DEPEND ON MAN'S WORTHINESS TO RECEIVE IT!** Man does not need to **EARN** or **DESERVE GOD'S MERCY.** **MERCY,** like **GRACE,** stands above limited human worth and effort. (*UNMERITED!*)

GOD'S MERCY is **FREE,** because **GOD IS NOT BOUND TO SHOW MERCY TO ANY!** It is **NOT** the **EXERCISE** of **MAN'S WILL** or **MAN'S STRIVING** that **COMPELS GOD** to **WITHHOLD HIS JUDGMENT,** but rather it is **HIS MERCY!**

Titus 3:5—“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but **ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY HE SAVED US,** by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18

Now, understand that our **HUMAN EFFORT** is a right response of our gratitude and commitment to **GOD** for **HIS GRACE IN CHRIST JESUS**, but it doesn't **MERIT GRACE**.

Cf. Ephesians 2:1-10

WE SEE THAT GOD'S CHOICES ARE NOT ARBITRARY...

WE SEE THAT GOD'S CHOICES ARE MERCIFUL...

III. WE SEE THAT GOD'S CHOICES OVERRULE EVIL!

(Vs. 17-18)

It was C. S. Lewis who stated that *"there are only two possibilities in the universe. Either a man says to God, 'Thy will be done,' or God says to man, 'All right then. Your will be done.' If you choose to do your will in this life instead of God's will, then one day you will face God's justice."*

What is the relation between **GOD'S MERCY** and **HIS JUDGMENT**? That is the issue *verses 17-18* deal with. **MERCY** and **JUSTICE** are not opposed to each other but work together.

The thought moves from **MOSES** to **PHARAOH**, the king of **EGYPT** at the time of the **EXODUS**. In *verse 17*, the **APOSTLE PAUL** presented his third historical illustration of the **SOVEREIGN LORD'S PURPOSE**.

[Note that this quotation is introduced with the words, *"For the Scripture saith,"* in place of *"thus saith the LORD,"* equating the **WORDS** of **GOD** with the **WORDS** of **SCRIPTURE**.]

This **SCRIPTURE** quotation comes from *Exodus 9:16*. This was spoken to the **EGYPTIAN PHARAOH** by the **LORD** through **MOSES**! The **LORD** says there, *"I raised thee up"* or I brought you onto the scene of history! **SCRIPTURE** is speaking a vivid reminder that it is **GOD WHO RAISED PHARAOH UP!**

BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18

"I raised thee up" is not only a reference to **PHARAOH'S** emergence in history, but to **GOD'S PROVIDENCE** in sparing him up to that point!

PHARAOH DESERVED DEATH for his **OPPRESSION** and **HIS ARROGANT, STUBBORN PRIDE!** But his life would not be taken during the series of plagues, so that not only the full extent of his **HARDNESS OF HEART** might be evident but also that the **GREATNESS OF GOD IN THE DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE** might be more clearly evident.

Over and over again, **PHARAOH** was moved by the **PLAGUES** that the **LORD** sent on him and his people, only to revert, once the impact wore off, back to his **ARROGANT** attitude of **RESISTANCE** to the **LORD'S** demands.

Repeatedly, he **HARDENED HIS HEART** (*Exodus 5:2*) until finally **GOD HARDENED IT FOR HIM** (*Exodus 7:3*). The history of **PHARAOH'S HEART-HARDENING** should be noted carefully, as should the **LORD'S** explanation of **HIS** actions.

GOD raised up **PHARAOH** in order that **HIS POWER** might be made known. **GOD CAN BE GLORIFIED THROUGH THOSE WHO OPPOSE HIM AS WELL AS THROUGH THOSE WHO TRUST AND SERVE HIM!** *Psalms 76:10*—*"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."*

The **LORD** placed **PHARAOH** in his position of visibility so that when his **HARD-HEARTEDNESS** came into conflict with **GOD'S PURPOSE**, he would become an international illustration of the eventual outcome of **OPPOSING GOD'S PURPOSES!**

If **PHARAOH** had been born in obscurity, with no one knowing him, his **SIN** would have been neither lesser nor greater.

**BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18**

But the **LORD** placed this **ARROGANT** man in a position where his **STUBBORN PRIDE** and **ADAMANT REFUSAL** to **CONSENT TO GOD'S WILL** would not only lead to his own downfall, but also to a **WORLDWIDE DEMONSTRATION** of **GOD'S DIVINE POWER**.

GOD'S FREEDOM TO SO ACT is a **RIGHT** of **HIS SOVEREIGNTY!**

The Book of **EXODUS** shows us that **PHARAOH** pitted himself, not just against **MOSES**, but against **GOD!** It also shows that the **LORD** used **PHARAOH'S HARDNESS** as an opportunity to **DEMONSTRATE HIS GLORY!**

The effect of **PHARAOH'S HOSTILITY**, accomplished the opposite of what he intended! It resulted in the **LIBERATION** of the **ISRAELITES**. Through **PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE**, **GOD'S POWER WAS DEMONSTRATED** as **HE** freed the **ISRAELITES** from under **PHARAOH'S HAND**. (*Romans 9:22*)

The **LORD'S** name was proclaimed in the earth as other nations heard about it and were awed!
(*Exodus 15:14-16; Joshua 2:10-11; 9:9; 1 Samuel 4:8*)

Now *Verse 18* of our text is the climatic conclusion of the argument.

Understand that as we read the account of the **HARDENING** of **PHARAOH'S** heart, sometimes it was attributed to the **LORD**, and other times it was attributed to **PHARAOH** himself. In **EXODUS**, **SCRIPTURE** records **TWENTY TIMES** when **PHARAOH'S HEART WAS HARDENED!**

TEN of those times, **GOD HARDENED HIS HEART** and **TEN** of those times **PHARAOH HARDENED IT HIMSELF!**

**BOOK OF ROMANS
GOD'S CHOICES AND FAIRNESS
ROMANS 9:14-18**

Understand, that when **GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART**, **HE** was only **CONFIRMING PHARAOH'S OWN DECISION!**

GOD HARDENS whom **HE CHOOSES** (lit. "*make stubborn*"; *Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:27; 14:4, 8; 14:17*)! That emphasizes the **FREEDOM OF GOD'S ACTION!** Because of **GOD'S PROPOSAL**, **PHARAOH HARDENED HIS HEART** (*Exodus 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35*). All this shows that **GOD CHOOSES** and **WORKS SOVEREIGNLY**, but **NOT ARBITRARILY!** Yet **PHARAOH** was responsible for his actions.

PHARAOH being **STUBBORN** in his heart is evidence of both his **UNBELIEF** and his **REBELLION**. Remember how we saw in *Romans 1* that **GOD** deals with those who **REJECT HIS REVELATION** of **HIMSELF** in **CREATION** and **HISTORY** by **GIVING THEM OVER** to move into still greater excesses of **SIN** and its **CONSEQUENCES!**

Conclusion

GOD DOES NOT ACT UNJUSTLY IN HIS SOVEREIGN CHOICES! Yet **HE** has claimed **HIS RIGHT** and **FREEDOM** in **HIS WORD** to act not only in **JUSTICE**, but also in **MERCY**. Throughout history **GOD** has often temporally employed **SEVERE MEASURES** in order to **SERVE HIS GRACIOUS ENDS**, which is the **SALVATION OF MEN**.

The wonder is not that some are **SAVED** and others are not, but that any body is **SAVED** at all. For we all **DESERVE** nothing from **GOD** but **JUDGMENT**. But thankfully **GOD** is a **GOD OF MERCY!** **HE** made a **PLAN** and a **WAY of SALVATION...IN CHRIST!**

DON'T HARDEN YOUR HEART AGAINST THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST! Heed **HIS WORD** and **YIELD TO HIS SOVEREIGN POWER AND PURPOSE!** If you remain **LOST**, the blame is yours, but all those who are **SAVED**, all the credit goes to **GOD!** **GOD** shows **HIS MERCY** toward those **WHO TRUST CHRIST JESUS!**